Dishonest Gain and the Harm Done to Your Neighbor

To better understand the seriousness of this sin — one ignored by most — we will address the subject at length.

In most nations, the relationship between citizen and state is based on a social contract founded on the principle of mutual responsibility and solidarity. This contract involves rights and obligations on both sides. The state has the responsibility to provide public services — such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, and social protection — while citizens have the obligation to contribute to their support in proportion to their income. This contribution is generally made through the payment of taxes, as established by law.

Citizens who earn income — from salaries, self-employment, rent, investments, or other sources — are required to contribute to the state budget. Income tax applies to earnings from any source, and in some countries the rate may be around 10%.

The purpose is not merely the collection of funds, but the fair redistribution of resources — taking more from those who earn much and giving more to those who earn little, so that no one is left without help. Thus, education is free for all children and hospitalization is accessible to everyone (in many or most countries), and roads, parks, and street lighting are equally available to both poor and rich.

From the perspective of the social contract, hiding income is a form of deceiving one's partner — in this case, the state, which acts as the instrument of organization and protection of society. In this sense, the benefits received from the state (education, healthcare, infrastructure, etc.) are paid for from the contributions of honest citizens, and to profit from them without contributing is a form of indirect theft.

A practical illustration: To understand the sin of hiding income, imagine that for years we ignored our obligation to the state, concealing earnings and avoiding paying the tax due. Meanwhile, the state — unaware of the deception — constantly provided public services: our children attended school for free, received free medical care, and were given allowances and scholarships. We enjoyed paved roads, sewage systems, gas, and electricity.

All these services were sustained from funds collected from citizens — including the tax that others paid honestly — while we chose not to contribute.

Taking Romania as an example:

If I have three children in school, and the standard annual cost for a child's education—according to the official allocation from the public budget—is about 10,000 lei (or around $2,300), then the state covers approximately 30,000 lei per year just for their education. This amount covers teachers' salaries, school maintenance expenses, utilities, and other basic educational services, and is funded entirely from public funds.

To this is added free medical care provided to the children. Besides education and health, they also receive monthly child allowances—290 lei for each—which means approximately 10,400 lei per year for the three children.

If I have a monthly income of 5,000 lei, the income tax is about 6,000 lei per year. Thus, even if I paid my taxes honestly, the state would still offer me benefits over 38,400 lei beyond my contribution. It is an abomination for me to hide my income in order not to pay those 6,000 lei, while the state—which I consider "pagan"—offers me 44,400 lei paid from the contributions of those honest people who pay VAT, taxes, and duties.

A lesson from the lives of Abraham and Judas. Imagine the biblical scene in which Abraham, the patriarch of faith, loses his wife, Sarah. The inhabitants of the land offer him a burial place—a cave—free of charge, as a sign of respect. But Abraham refuses to receive it without payment. Why? Because he did not want to take advantage, not even when something was offered to him for free. He wanted to remain clean and to live righteously, both before God and before people.

Now imagine the opposite: someone receives help from the state— subsidies, funds, allowances, social support, free medical services—which he accepts as if they were rightfully his, and on top of this chooses to deceive the one who does him so much good. He hides his income, works under the table, or exploits the system without contributing. It is as if someone offered to help him with money to build a house, and he, instead of giving thanks, stole money from his benefactor's wallet.

Abraham did not want anything for free, even when he could have taken advantage. In receiving help from the state — which comes from the contributions of all — we are called to choose the same path: honesty. Let us not steal from the common storehouse, from the bread of others, from the effort of those who have contributed honestly, but let us also be among those who give joyfully. Only then can we truly receive child allowances, free medical care — not as profiteers, but as honest citizens who first give, and then receive what is rightfully theirs.

This image becomes all the more troubling when I compare it with my own choices: I have benefited from what I did not deserve, and I have even stolen and deceived the

one who gave to me, hiding the truth. The reason? I loved a dishonest gain, as Scripture says in Hosea 9:1. I have applied for subsidies, grants, social aid, firewood, heating assistance — and I took them with both hands wide open, as if they were mine by right, without asking myself whether I was truly entitled to them. But when the time came to give what I owed, my hands seemed sewn into my pockets.

I hid, declared smaller incomes, avoided responsibility. My heart was trained in greed, as Scripture says: “They have a heart trained in greed” (2 Peter 2:14). Not only did I take advantage, I also hid the truth, driven by selfish desires and an insatiable hunger for gain.

Abraham, on the other hand, hungering for righteousness, lived in the integrity given by God, choosing not to covet anything belonging to his neighbor — not even a thread — keeping himself pure before the Righteous One. Although he did not have the commandment written explicitly on tablets — “You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor” (Exodus 20:17) — as we have today, it was engraved in his heart by God.

When the king of Sodom offered him the riches as spoils of war, he refused categorically, saying: “I will take nothing that belongs to you, not even a thread or a strap of a sandal” (Genesis 14:23). He did not want to profit from the work of others, motivated by the justice of God. For him, being righteous as God is righteous mattered more than any material gain.

He chose the light of righteousness, guided by faith and justice. I was driven by selfish desires; he was guided by a clean conscience before God. Faced with the same temptation, he chose to remain pure; I chose to stain myself.

The deeds of my faith do not resemble those of Abraham — the father of the faithful — but rather those of Judas, who stole from the common purse, about whom it is written: “He was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it” (John 12:6). Judas, driven by love of money, chose wrongdoing. He stole from their small storehouse — a purse from which the disciples’ expenses as they traveled with the Lord Jesus were covered. He took what was not his, hiding under the mask of service.

Between the two lies a moral and spiritual distance as great as heaven and earth. Abraham’s integrity was the fruit of faith, while Judas’s greed was the expression of a heart alienated from God. One builds, the other destroys.

Therefore, if I want to be an heir of the Kingdom of God, I must have the faith of Abraham — not the greed of Judas. As it is written: “…heirs are those who have the

faith of Abraham" (Romans 4:16). The inheritance of the Kingdom is not for those who merely bear a religious name, but for those who live the faith of Abraham — a faith that manifests itself in righteousness.

Failure to pay taxes is an abomination before God. It is an act that reflects the character of Judas — motivated by greed and followed by a false spiritual security. My likeness to Judas, and not to Abraham, shows that I am not hungering for righteousness. This is a grave warning: my deeds betray a false faith, devoid of the fruits of obedience and integrity.

Scripture warns us about how God views this attitude, even when it is masked by social or economic arguments. In Isaiah 57:17, God says: "Because of his sinful greed, I was angry and punished him; I hid myself in anger, yet he kept on in his willful ways." This greed is not merely a moral problem — it is rebellion against order and justice.

When someone refuses to contribute, even the small amount owed in proportion to modest income, they steal from the common storehouse. They benefit from services paid for by others, without giving anything in return. It is a hidden form of injustice, in which one exploits collective solidarity without participating in it. Even a small contribution has value, because it expresses responsibility, honesty, and respect for the common good.

If Judas's greed is clearly seen in stealing from a small storehouse, our act is no less serious simply because the storehouse from which we take is bigger. The fact that "it is not noticed" what I take does not change the nature of the act. Greed is the same, and theft remains theft, regardless of size. God does not judge by the size of the storehouse, but by the integrity of the heart.

Such a person is a deceiver and a thief, like Judas, who stole from his brothers. Therefore, they do not deserve to enjoy the benefits of the system, but deserve condemnation, because they have chosen to deceive and take advantage, rather than contribute.

That is why states have laws that punish tax evasion — not only because it breaks the social contract, but because it violates the moral ethics that form the foundation of a just society. Tax evasion is not merely an economic crime; it is a form of injustice against the community, a betrayal of the solidarity that sustains the common good.

In Romania, for example, undeclared work is legally defined as both tax evasion and fraud, because it involves receiving or offering money secretly without fulfilling legal obligations to the state. It is regulated by: • Law no. 241/2005 on preventing and combating tax evasion, Article 9, which states: hiding income, failing to record it in

legal documents… are crimes punishable by imprisonment from 2 to 8 years. • Labor Code — Law no. 53/2003, Article 260, paragraph (1), letter e), which states: employing someone without a written individual work contract prior to starting work is a crime punishable by imprisonment from 1 to 2 years or a criminal fine.

This post is an excerpt from the booklet "Life Lived in the Righteousness of Christ", which you can read in full, free of charge. More studies and resources for spiritual awakening are available at https://www.unmodifiedword.com.